

Minutes of the Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting January 23, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 PM.

Attending Committee Members were: Bob Dorer, Shawn Hanegan, Jacinda Barbehenn, Soraya Stevens, and Dan Silverman

Guests included: Marc Saucier – Traffic Enforcement Officer, Robert Bongiorno - Chief of Police, Amy Hamilton – Bedford Resident

- The meeting began with Chief Bongiorno introducing Officer Saucier and discussing his role as Traffic Enforcement Officer. Officer Saucier focuses on the “3E’s” of Enforcement, Engineering, and Education. He coordinates studies, grant proposals, and education efforts, among other activities.
- Officer Saucier summarized some of the activities in the Traffic Enforcement department. Officer Saucier pointed out that traffic congestion is the biggest problem in town. The traffic congestion seemed to become worse after the Route 3 updates when people started using Bedford as a cut-through. One of the activities his department performed was to get all of the stop-signs accounted for and tracked properly. Many signs were present but did not have adequate documentation as having been approved by the Selectmen.
- The TAC asked Officer Saucier how frequently they had calls for accidents during commute times. Officer Saucier indicated it was not frequent. He indicated that because of the congestion, the accidents that did occur tended to be at slower speeds.
- The TAC asked Officer Saucier about their recent effort that involved sending out an undercover pedestrian to use the crosswalks around town and determine how drivers were responding to pedestrian traffic. There were many citations issued and the effort was successful, however it was noted that the Traffic Enforcement department does not have adequate resources to conduct this kind of effort frequently. Officer Saucier indicated they would likely do this type of exercise again in the future.
- The TAC asked if there were occurrences of road rage. Officer Saucier indicated that their department was not receiving reports of road rage very often. Chief Bongiorno indicated that they will respond to calls of road rage if people take photos of license plates and report them to the police department. The department will send letters to the owner of the vehicle to make them aware of the issue.

- Cindy asked about a Wilson Park crosswalk. Officer Saucier indicated that they were trying to get rid of mid-block crosswalks. He indicated that the Wilson park area is problematic and was a safety concern due to the lack of visibility due to the curve.
- There was discussion about the Hancock Rd repaving project, including the use of sharrows. Marc indicated that there are several options that can be incorporated into repaving efforts to help calm traffic, including narrower lanes, reflective paint, stop signs with LEDs around the border, and sharrows. There was a study done to determine if some of the designs used in the Hancock repaving effort were impacting the speeds through the neighborhood. Prior to the repaving effort, the 85 percentile speed was 34mph in a 30 mph neighborhood. With the repaving effort, it was reduced to approximately 32mph.
- Officer Saucier and Chief Bongiorno discussed a MCC (Middlesex Community College) study on distracted drivers performed by a Criminal Justice class. Based on some of these results, Officer Saucier is developing a week-long education program for the Bedford High School on the dangers of distracted driving (driving while texting). The program will include speakers whose lives have been affected by accidents caused by distracted drivers, and possibly use of a simulator to illustrate the effects of distracted driving. The program is intended to start this year in the Spring and will be held annually.
- The North Road and Chelmsford Road intersection was raised as another problematic intersection. Amy Hamilton mentioned that she has personally seen three accidents at that intersection. Amy Hamilton indicated that the large trees near the stop sign make it difficult to see oncoming traffic coming from the right and that removal of those trees would make the intersection safer. Several suggestions were made by the group: removing the trees and poles that obstruct the view of Chelmsford Road, putting in a stoplight, or turning the intersection into a three-way stop. The suggestions were discussed and potential pitfalls of the suggestions were raised. The Transportation Advisory Committee approved a motion for the TAC Chair to send a memo to the selectmen noting the TAC's continuing concern about the safety of this intersection and recommending the concept of funding an independent, well qualified consultant in the area of difficult intersections layout to assess the intersection and independently determine options for the selectmen to consider to make the intersection safer (as suggested by Chief Bongiorno).
- The group discussed another problematic intersection at Mudge Way and Great Road. In particular, it was noted that it is difficult to make a left turn from Mudge Way onto the Great Road. Officer Saucier agreed that it was difficult but that because of the relatively slow speed at that part of Great

Road, there were very few accidents that occurred because of that turn. He also mentioned that the DPW is currently looking for funding to install a Mudge Way traffic signal as it appears to meet the warrant for a signalized intersection

- Cindy suggested that the traffic light at South Road and Great Road could be improved by using diagonal crosswalks since the pedestrian light stops traffic in all directions. The diagonal crosswalks could be perceived as an indication of the emphasis the town places on supporting pedestrians. Dan and Bob pointed out that use of a diagonal crosswalk would require the light to be re-timed since there is a longer distance to be traveled on the diagonal. Officer Saucier indicated that the added crosswalk could increase the risk of slipping for motorcyclists and bicyclists turning at that light. Dan indicated that if the DPW used paint that contained sand, the surface would not be slippery. Cindy also noted such additional emphasis on pedestrian crossing markings might help send a message to motorists that Bedford takes pedestrian access seriously.
- Cindy also suggested incorporating signs around town to indicate to out-of-town drivers that Bedford places importance on its pedestrians. Soraya indicated that the pedestrian signs and notifying via the media along with issuing citations for not yielding to pedestrian traffic in crosswalks could discourage use of the Great Road as a pass-through.
- Bob recommended that traffic enforcement department continue with more traffic calming. Some discussion ensued on what constitutes traffic calming and where it might make sense to consider it in Bedford.
- Officer Saucier and Chief Bongiorno left the meeting at approximately 8:55pm.
- The meeting minutes of Dec 19, 2013 were discussed and accepted with one correction.
- Shawn Hanegan gave an update on recent Planning Board activities and discussions, which were primarily focused on affordable housing. There was really no additional discussion on transportation.
- Dan indicated that he was very impressed by the Comprehensive Plan. Although there was attention paid to alternative transportation, it does not address the issue of having traffic coming in from other towns. Bedford is a pass-through town and that is the real issue. We need to make Bedford less appealing as a pass-through town. Bob suggested more of an express bus between Bedford and the Cambridge and Boston area.

- Dan pointed out that a year ago South Road used to be backed up to Loomis, but now there are days when traffic is backed up to Summer Street. The traffic appears inconsistent.
- It was suggested that the town utilize the traffic signal synchronization option for the currently interconnected signals between South and Great Road and Loomis and Great Road as a way of improving traffic flow.
- It was suggested that we make use of local and more broadly (the Globe) media to market Bedford as a pedestrian-and bike friendly town. Bob recommended that Cindy write an article for the Bedford Citizen to promote Bedford as a pedestrian friendly town.
- Dan and Bob informed the group that Lexington and the state are considering a roundabout at Hartwell and the on-off ramps for I-95. Bob indicated that the Lexington team had not considered the impact of a roundabout on the Bedford traffic. Dan and Bob indicated that a roundabout would make the Bedford traffic problems worse, while making the Lexington traffic better.
- Bob asked Shawn if there were any more planning board updates. Shawn indicated there would be meetings on January 28th and February 11th. The format is to solicit input and have more of a discussion. The planning board intended to have three public workshops. They have held two so far. These upcoming meetings are the third one.
- It was noted that there seemed to be lots of “tear downs” around town. Beirens garage has gone out of business and was torn down. Soraya suggested looking into adding a trail somewhere near Beirens and the Blueberry Goat Farm to possibly connect to a back entrance / path to the Bedford Farms office complex area via a crossing on Concord Road in this area down from Wilson Park. This would provide an alternative for the High School and Middle School kids to get to karate and Bedford Farms and avoid having to cross the street near Sullivan Tire.
- Bob pointed out there is an old “paper street”, Old Middlesex Road, south of the McConnell’s property from North Road to the existing end of pavement on Middlesex Road in the vicinity of Paul Revere Road that still appears on the maps but has been unused for several decades. Depending on land ownership this may present a future trail extension opportunity.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Soraya Stevens